

GOLD

By
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EDWARD
WHITE

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CHAPTER XV. The Strike.

WE awoke the fourth morning to a bright day. The helmeted quail were calling. The bees were just beginning a sun warmed hum among the bushes. A languorous warmth hung in the air and a Sunday stillness. It was as though we awakened to a new world, untrodden by men, which was, indeed, a good deal the case.

While we ate breakfast we discussed our plans. The first necessity, of course, was to find out about gold. To that end we agreed to separate for the day, prospecting far and wide. Bagby kept camp and an eye on the horses. He displayed little interest in the gold proposition, but insisted strongly that we carry both our rifles and revolvers.

It would be difficult to describe the thrill of anticipation with which I set off up the valley. The place was so new, so untouched, so absolutely unknown. The high ridges on either side frowned down sternly on the little meadows that smiled back quite unabashed. As I crossed the brown, dry meadow toward the river a covey of quail whirled away before me, lit and paced off at a great rate. Two big grouse roared from a thicket.

The river was a beautiful, clear stream, with green wavery water whirling darkly in pools or breaking white among the stones. As my shadow fell upon it I caught a glimpse of a big trout scurrying into the darkness beneath a boulder. Picking my way among the loose stones, I selected a likely place on the bar and struck home my pick.

I have since repeated the sensations of that day—on a smaller scale, of course—in whipping untold trout waters, same early excitement and enthusiasm, same eager sustained persistence in face of failure, same incredulous slowing down, same ultimate discouragement, disbelief and disgust. All that day I shoveled and panned.



All That Day I Shoveled and Panned.

The early morning freshness soon dissipated. Between the high mountain walls the heat reflected. All the quail stood beneath the shade of bushes, their heads half open, as though panting. The birds that had sung so sweetly in the early morning had somewhere sought repose. I could occasionally catch glimpses of our horses doing under trees. Even the chirping insects were still. As far as I could make out I was the only living thing foolish enough to stay abroad and awake in that suffocating heat. The sweat dripped from me in streams. My eyes ached from the glare of the sun on the rocks and the bleached grasses. Toward the close of the afternoon I confessed sneakily to myself that I was just a little glad I had found no gold and that I hoped the others had been equally unfortunate. The thought of working day after day in that furnace heat was too much for me.

My hopes were fulfilled. All came in that night tired, hot, dirty and discouraged. Not one of the eight of us had raised a sign of color.

"Well," said Bagby philosophically, "that's all right. We've just got to go higher. Tomorrow we'll move up stream."

Accordingly next day we turned at right angles to our former route and followed up the bed of the canyon ten or twelve miles toward the distant main ranges.

About 4 o'clock we camped. The flat was green. Little clumps of cedar pushed out across it. The oaks had given place to cottonwoods. We had now to make acquaintance with new birds.

The following morning we went prospecting again. My instructions were for the dry washes in the sides of the hills. Accordingly I scrambled up among the boulders in the nearest V shaped ravine. I had hardly to look at all. Behind a large boulder lay a little cuplike depression of stones in which evidently had stood a recently evaporated pool of water and which in consequence was free from the usual dusty rubble. In the interstices between the stones my eye caught a dull glitter. I fell on my knees, dug about with the point of my bowie knife and

so unearthed small nuggets aggregating probably a half ounce in weight.

Although mightily tempted to stay for more, I minded our agreement to report promptly the first discovery and started back to camp. Why I did not come a header in that fearful boulder strewn wash I cannot tell you. Certainly I took no care of my gold, but leaped recklessly from rock to rock like a goat. When I reached the flat I ran, whooping like an Indian. From the river I could see Johnny and Buck Barry running, too, and had sense enough to laugh as it occurred to me they must think us attacked by Indians. Far down the stream I could just make out figures I knew to be Yank and McNally. They, too, seemed to be coming to camp, though I could not imagine that my shouts had carried so far.

I burst in on Bagby, who was smoking his pipe and leisurely washing the breakfast dishes, with a whoop, lifted him bodily by the shoulders, whirled him around in a clumsy dance. He aimed a swipe at me with the wet dishcloth that caught me across the eyes. "You tarnation young crazy bair!" said he.

I wiped the water from my eyes. Johnny and Buck Barry ran up. Somehow they did not seem to be participating in an Indian attack after all. Johnny ran up to thump me on the back. "Isn't it great?" he cried. "Right off the reel! First pop! Bagby, old sport, you're a wonder!" He started for Bagby, who promptly rushed for his long rifle.

"I'm going to kill the first lunatic I see," he announced.

Johnny laughed excitedly and turned back to thump me again.

"How did you guess what it was?" I asked.

"Didn't. Just blundered on it."

"What?" I yelled. "Have you struck it too?"

"First shovel," said Johnny. "But you don't mean—"

I thrust my three nuggets under his eyes.

"Say," broke in Buck Barry. "If you fellows know where the whisky is hide it, and hide it quick. If I see it I'll get drunk!"

Yank and McNally at this moment strolled from around the bushes. We all burst out on them.

"See your fool nuggets and 'color' and raise you this," drawled Yank. And he hauled from his pocket the very largest chunk of virgin gold I have ever seen my good fortune to behold. It was irregular in shape, pitted and scored, shaped a good deal like an egg and nearly its size. One pound and a tiny fraction that great nugget balanced when we got around to weighing it. And then to crown the glorious day which the gods were brimming for us came Don Gaspar and Vanque, trailed by that long and saturnine individual, Missouri Jones. The Spaniards were outwardly calm, but their eyes snapped. As soon as they saw us they waved their hats.

"Ah, also you have found the gold!" cried Don Gaspar, sensing immediately the significance of our presence.

"We too. It is of good color, there above by the bend." His eye widened as he saw what Yank held. "Madre de Dios!" he murmured.

McNally, who had said and done nothing, suddenly uttered a resounding whoop and stood on his hands. Missouri Jones, taking aim, spat carefully in the center of the fire, missing the dishpan by a calculated and accurate inch.

"The country is just flowing with gold," he pronounced.

Then we blew up. We hugged each other, we pounded each other's backs, we emulated McNally's wild Irish whoops, finally we joined hands and danced around and around the remains of the fire, kicking up our heels absurdly. Bagby, a leathery grin on his face, stood off one side. He still held his long barreled rifle, which he presented at who ever needed him.

"I tell you, look out!" he kept saying over and over. "I'm shootin' lunatics today, and apparently there's plenty of 'em to choose from."

Although we did not immediately run into the expected thousands, nor did the promise of that first glorious day of discovery quite fulfill itself, nevertheless our new diggings turned out to be very rich. We felt into routine, and the days and weeks slipped by. Bagby and one companion went out every day to hunt or to fish. We took turns at a vacation in camp. Every night we "blew" our day's collection of sand, weighed the gold and packed it away. Our accumulations were getting to be very valuable.

For a month we lived this idyllic life quite unmolested and had gradually come to feel that we were so far out of the world that nothing would ever disturb us. The days seemed all alike, clear, sparkling, cloudless. It was my first experience with the California climate, and these things were a perpetual wonder to my New England mind.

Then one day when I was camp keeper at the upper end of our long meadow a number of men emerged from the willows and hesitated uncertainly. They were too far away to be plainly distinguishable, but I believed in taking no chances, so I drew my revolver to attract the attention of my companions. They looked up from their labor, saw the men and promptly came into camp.

The group still hesitated at the edge of the thicket. Then one of them waved something white. We waved in return, whereupon they advanced slowly in our direction.

As they neared we saw them to be Indians. Their leader held before him a stick to which had been tied a number of white feathers. As they approached us they began to leap and dance to the accompaniment of a weird rising and falling chant. They certainly did not look very formidable with their heterogeneous mixture of clothing, their round, black, stupid faces and their straight hair. Most of them were armed simply with bows and arrows, but three carried specimens of the long Spanish musket.

The Indians said they wanted to trade.

We replied that we saw nothing they might trade with us.

In return they produced some roots and several small bags of pine nuts.

We then explained that we were reduced in ammunition and had little food.

Don Gaspar here interpolated hastily, saying that in his judgment it would be absolutely necessary that we made some sort of a present to avoid the appearance of intending an affront.



"Isn't it great?" he said. "Right off the reel! First pop!"

Buck Barry and Jones seemed instantly to accept this necessity.

"Give them two or three of the saddle blankets," suggested Barry after a moment's thought. "We will have several light horses going out, and if we have to pad the saddles we can get along with skins or something."

We gave our visitors the blankets therefore. They seemed well pleased, arose and shortly made a primitive sort of a camp a short distance outside our stockade. We did no more washing that day. About 5 o'clock our hunters came in with the best meat of a blacktail deer. Bagby listened attentively to our account of the interview. Then he took a hind quarter of the newly killed buck and departed for the Indians' camp, where he stayed for an hour.

"I don't think they are out for meanness," he announced when he returned. "They tell me this yere is on a sort of short cut from some of the Truckee lakes down to their villages. But we got to keep a sharp eye on our horses, and we got to stand guard to-night."

Very early in the morning, when we were just up, several of the elders came over to tell us that some of the young men would stay to work for us, if we so desired. We replied that we had no goods with which to pay for work. Shortly after the whole tribe vanished down river.

A week passed, and we had almost forgotten our chance visitors. One day the two Spaniards, Buck Barry and I were at the cradle. Bagby, Yank and McNally were the hunters for the day. Johnny and Missouri Jones kept camp.

We had had a most successful morning and were just stacking our tools preparatory to returning to camp for dinner. Buck Barry was standing near some small sage bushes at the upper end of the diggings. He was just in the act of lighting a freshly filled pipe when he stopped as though petrified, the burning match suspended above the bowl of his pipe. Then he turned quickly toward the sage brush, and as he did so a bow twanged, and an arrow sang past his head, so close as actually to draw blood from the lobe of his ear. With a roar of anger Buck Barry raised his pickax and charged into the bush. We saw a figure rise from the ground, dash away, stumble flat. Before the man could get up again Buck Barry was upon him, and the pickax descended. At the same instant we heard a series of whoops and two shots in rapid succession from the direction of camp. Buck Barry came bounding out of the sage brush and seized his rifle from under the bush where he had kept them.

"Come on!" he panted. "Let's get out of this!"

We ran as hard as we could for a hundred yards, or until we had reached the flat of the river bottom. Then we paused, uncertain as to just what next to do.

"Wait a minute," said I. "I'll just take a look," and hurried up a little spur knoll to the right. From that elevation I instantly caught sight of a crowd of Indians coming up the valley at full speed. Most of them were on horseback, but a number loped along on foot, keeping up with the animals. One look was enough. I raced down to my companions again, and we hastily took refuge in the only cover near enough to conceal us—a little clump of willows in a small damp watercourse. There we crouched, rifles ready.

(Continued next Tuesday.)

They All Do Then.

"Tell me, is there over a time when you feel that you really hate your band?"

"Yes. The times when he telephones me at the last minute that he won't be home to supper."—Detroit Free Press.

LOCAL AND GENERAL NEWS

Members of the Methodist Protestant church of this city are extremely pleased over the action of the Muskingum conference at Zanesville Thursday in recommending that the 1917 session be held in Mt. Vernon.

It has been twelve years since this city has had the honor of entertaining the conference. A conference church was built in Zanesville at that time where it was understood that all future sessions should be held.

Next year will mark the diamond jubilee celebration of the founding of the conference. A special commission was appointed to take charge of the arrangements for this affair and this body of men recommended to the conference Thursday that Mt. Vernon should have the honor of entertaining the conference at that time.

It is peculiarly fitting that this city should be selected for the reason that 75 years ago the Muskingum conference was given birth here after a split with the Pittsburgh conference which resulted in a complete alienation.

A dispatch from Zanesville Friday stated that all that was needed to make Mt. Vernon the meeting place next year was the acceptance by the local church.

The banner conversed with several members of the Methodist Protestant church here Friday and all were of the opinion that the local congregation would unhesitatingly and enthusiastically decide to entertain the conference.

Definite action will be taken upon the return from the conference of Rev. O. E. Ford, pastor of the local church.

The other chief item of business which the conference took up in its session Thursday was the matter of merging the Muskingum and the Ohio conferences. A committee was appointed for the purpose of conferring with a like body from the Ohio conference.

The report of the Diamond Jubilee commission was one of the most interesting features of Thursday's conference. It was read by the chairman of the commission, Dr. C. E. Sheppard, and it recommended first that the Pittsburgh conference send a representative with greetings from that body and that Dr. Coburn, president of the conference, make the response. It further recommended that the Diamond Jubilee sermon be preached by Rev. C. S. Johnson, D.D., and that Dr. C. H. Beck give a brief historical sketch of the conference.

As a jubilee memorial the commission recommended that a whirlwind campaign be inaugurated for the raising of the \$7,500 to help endow a home for the aged at West Lafayette, and that this be under the direction of a forward movement commission to be composed of Rev. C. S. Johnson, of Columbus; Rev. G. G. Shurtz of Zanesville; Rev. W. E. Grove of Old Fort; Mr. Lyon of Steubenville and Mr. Harry Ames of Cambridge, with Dr. Coburn to have general supervision of the work.

Within one-half hour after being arraigned on a charge of cruelty to animals and after having pleaded not guilty to the charge, Oscar Scoles of Danville reappeared before Squire Harris and changed his plea to guilty. He was fined \$5 and costs, which he paid, and was released. Scoles was charged with having cruelly beaten a horse. He was arraigned Thursday morning.

Fredericktown, Sept. —Bids for the construction of the new school building here were opened yesterday afternoon by the board of education. There were ten firms in the field and, when the tabulation was finally made, it was found that the following were low:

Construction—Winters & Wilson of Strauburg, \$33,475.
Heating—Columbus Heating Ventilating Co. of Columbus, \$3,850.
Plumbing—Huffman & Conklin of

Columbus, \$1,980.

The respective work was awarded these three firms and contracts will be entered into as soon as they can be drawn up. Work will be started as soon as possible.

Mt. Gilead, Sept. 8.—John Oberdier, Mt. Gilead blacksmith, has been asked to consider an offer of \$25,000 cash, and a royalty for the U. S. and Canadian rights on his recent invention of a nut lock for a bolt. In lieu of the royalty the firm making the offer asks Mr. Oberdier to consider the complete sale of the patent rights for \$50,000 in cash.

Mr. Oberdier's patent has been seen by a number of Mt. Gilead people. It consists of a wire placed in a groove along the bolt, permitting the wire to be bent back after the nut has been screwed on and locked. Simple though the device is, it is evidently thought to possess great mechanical value.

Mr. Oberdier has had the nut lock patented in the U. S., but has not yet secured the Canadian rights.

Mr. and Mrs. Winslow Howard were surprised by the return of their youngest son, Bartly, on Thursday. He has been in England for a year, going from there to New York where he was employed on the street cars. The strike having freed him, he returned to his home on West Vine street.

A glass of poison swallowed accidentally by Robert Doty, 502 West Vine street, Thursday shortly before midnight threw his family into paroxysms of fear and resulted in the summoning of the police on the part of some neighbors who thought something terrible was transpiring within the walls of the Doty residence.

Robert Doty is employed at the Cooper foundry. His mother-in-law, Mrs. Hunter of Newark, is visiting at his home. The latter was scratched by poison ivy several days ago and procured medicine which she applied externally.

On Thursday night while at work, Doty became sick and determined to go home. On his way, he stopped at the office of a physician and obtained some medicine for his ailment. This he placed near a wash-bowl on arriving at his house.

Later he went to the bowl to take a pill. Placing it in his mouth, he reached for a glass in which to pour some water. It was dark and he picked up the tumbler wherein his mother-in-law had placed her ivy poisoning medicine.

A few moments later, he had discovered his mistake and in alarm informed his family what he had done. A call was put in immediately for a physician who, when he arrived, took immediate measures to safeguard Doty against any bad effects from the dose of poison.

These proved effectual, but in the meantime the excited screams of the other members of the Doty family had been heard by neighbors and the police were called. They answered but soon ascertained the true condition of affairs and took their departure.

Doty will experience no evil effects from the poison.

Mt. Vernon is to be visited on Sept. 20 by a delegation from the Manufacturers and Jobbers' association of Columbus, who have planned a tour of various towns for that day. This information was received Friday morning in a letter to Mayor Mitchell from the Columbus organization. The company will bring with them a band, Harvey J. Moore, vocalist, and a number of speakers. The object of the tour is stated to be for the purpose of making the acquaintance of the business men in the towns visited.

The party is scheduled to stop in Mt. Vernon from 4:45 o'clock p. m. until 5 o'clock, making the longest stay of any place on the trip. The mayor turned his letter over to the chamber of commerce, which will take in hand the arrangements for receiving the visitors.

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